CHRISTMAS

GOOD old-fashioned Chris'mas, with the logs upon the hearth,
The table filled with feasters an' the room a-roar 'th mirth,
With the stockin's crammed to bu'stin', an' the medders piled 'ith snow—
A good old-fashioned Chris'mas like we had so long ago!

Now that's the thing I'd like to see ag'in afore I die,
But Chris'mas in the city here—it's different, oh my!
With the crowded hustle-bustle of the slushy, noisy street,
An' the scowl upon the faces of the strangers that you meet.

Oh, there's buyin', plenty of it, of a lot o' gorgeous toys;
An' it takes a mint o' money to please modern girls and boys.
Why, I mind the time a jack-knife an' a toffy-lump for me
Made my little heart an' stockin' jus' chock-full of Chris'mas glee.

An' there's feastin'. Think o' feedin' with these stuck-up city folk!
Why, ye have to speak in whispers, an' ye dar'sn't crack a joke.
Then remember how the tables looked all crowded with your kin,
When you couldn't hear a whistle blow across the merry din!

You see I'm so old-fashioned-like I don't care much for style,
An' to eat your Chris'mas banquets here I wouldn't go a mile;
I'd rather have, like Solomon, a good yarb-dinner set
With real old friends than turkle soup with all the nobs you'd get.

There's my next-door neighbor Gurley—fancy how his brows 'u'd lift
If I'd holler "Merry Chris'mas! Caught, old fellow, Chris'mas gift!"
Lordy-Lord, I 'd like to try it! Guess he'd nearly have a fit.
Hang this city stiffness, anyways, I can't get used to it.

Then your heart is kept a-swellin' till it nearly bu'st your side,
An' by night your jaws were achin' with you smiles four inches wide.
An' your enemy, the wo'stone, you 'd just grab his hand, an' say:
"Mebbe, both of us was wrong, John. Come, let's shake. It's Chris'mas Day!"

Mighty little Chris'mas spirit seems to dwell 'tween city walls,
Where each snowflake brings a soot-flake for a brother as it falls;
Mighty little Chris'mas spirit! An' I'm pinin', don't you know,
For a good old-fashioned Chris'mas like we had so long ago.

—Century.

SOMETHING TANGIBLE.

HE was tired; the look of ennui on the stern, cold face, the drawn expression about the eyes, the listless pose of the body, the aimless, uncertain wandering of the thin, nervous fingers bespoke it, verified it, made it certain.

Yes; he was tired. As he glanced about his elegant offices, now deserted by the clerks for the New Year's holiday, the suggestion of wealth, power, and high financial standing had no charm to evoke enthusiasm. To Richard Penrith the handsome balance in the ledger, the princely securities locked up in the massive safe, the plump bank account at the great trust institution across the way, were no more at that moment than a heap of dross, a bundle of withered autumn leaves.

One o'clock in the afternoon; the clerks had gone home, and he sat lost in gloomy, profitless, motiveless reverie. Two—he still stared at vacancy, thinking of nothing, of everything; wishing the wheels of business would never stop, feeling as lonely and out of his element in the festive prospects of the next day, as if he was an uncongenial spirit from another world.

Three o'clock.

From the stone-paved court below, there was wafted to his hearing the merry voices of young clerks and messenger boys engaging in the pranks and capers that followed the last "settling up" of the year. The hearty, boyish accents made him wince. How long it seemed since he was a boy! How many years since he put love, emotion, every human sentiment, into a sealed casket, buried it fathoms deep, and became a sordid, money-making machine! With a sigh, bitter and resentful, he put on his hat, hurried from the office, stepped into his handsome carriage at the curb below, and was driven homeward down the magnificent boulevard, one of the richest, certainly the most wretched, of men in all the great city.

The portals of his princely home opened to admit him to luxury and comfort a king might covet. His sister, who directed in domestic affairs and well maintained the social status of the establishment, met him, attired with the elegance of a queen.

"Richard, we shall need you to-night."

He frowned irritably.

"What is it now?" he queried.

"A reception. I expect two generals, an artist, and some of the best people of our set. Do try and come out of your shell of uncongeniality for once."

"And shrivel in the hypocritical glare of false friendship and hollow pleasure?" he interrupted bitterly. "No, sister. I thank you, but a quiet corner for me. I am tired—I am weary of all this show, vanity and vain labor. Five years a drudge, five more a cynical, flint-hearted money-maker, and what is the recompense?"

His sister stared at him in amazement. The recompense! Was the man going mad? Wealth, social eminence, a proud name! What heights could possibly lay beyond that pinnacle of earthly grandeur and success?

"Excuse me for to-night," pleaded Penrith. "I am tired of it all. Oh, if out of it all I could extract one grain of comfort, one genuine emotion of enjoyment—something akin to the old boyish zest—something tangible!"

Something tangible! He dwelt on the words at the stately dinner table. They lingered with him as he tried to settle down to a quiet smoke in the library. There arose in his mind a picture of the past. It was poverty, obscurity then; but a thought of the bare-footed rambles through the woods, of the real coziness of the little attic-room back at the old homestead, of ambitions tinged with ideal sentiment and glowing hopes, glorified the years now dead.

He glanced from the window at the dying day. Mournful, inexpressibly cold, repellant, unlovely, seemed the wilderness of stately mansions and stiff, precise equipages on the street without. How different the dear old village where he was born! The narrow streets, its quaint homes, its heart-warming people floated across his vision now, and seemed part of another world.

It was not so very far away. That little country town nestling among the hills was only an hour's ride from the great metropolis. Was he getting sentimental? What was this strange impulse that lured him to steal thither like a thief ashamed, and try to warm the frozen currents of his dreary life at the ashes of a dead past?

Ah! the dear old town. How natural it looked! The old red school-house, the rickety depot, the broad common—once again, for the first time in ten years, Richard Penrith trod his native soil that night.

He wandered about the place like an uneasy ghost haunting the scenes of former experiences. He felt a keen pang of actual envy as he peered through the frost-crested windows of the homely village store, and saw its proprietor, happy, serene, all one glow of perfect delight over the gathering in of an extra few dollars for holiday business. Why! a turn of stock in the city often meant a fortune for him, and yet scarcely stirred a nerve!

All heart, all sympathy, all human, simple felicity! What a paradise, compared to the hot-house, superficial life of the city! He paused as a name spoken by a bent, old man, passing with a companion, struck his ear with a shock.

"It's all Miss Naomi's doings, sir. Bless her dear heart! She's nursed my wife back to health, she's got my boy a situation, and we ain't the first that angel of charity has helped."

"Miss Hewitt is a great friend to the poor; yes."

Naomi — Miss Hewitt! Richard Penrith stood stock still on the snowy street. A slight flush surmounted his brow, his eyes grew larger, then tender.

Strange how he had forgotten her—stranger still that after all these years the sudden recurrence of that once treasured name could stir his nature as it had not been moved for nearly a decade!

He tried to smile at the memory of their boy and girl love, but failed. Something choked him as he walked on, and paused to peer through the windows of a neat, pretty cottage. Yes, there was the "best room" brightly lighted, and old Mrs. Hewitt seated knitting, surrounded by coziness and warmth. There was the pretty rustic porch. How often he had kissed Naomi good-night under the dew-spangled vines surrounding it. All was the same, only the vines were dead and drooping now. All was the same. His heart gave a great bound as the vivid lamplight showed a little framed portrait on the wall; his picture as he had been, treasured, esteemed faithfully by the winsome lass he had sacrificed to the cold, cynical demands of gold.

He fell to wondering how Naomi looked now. She was not visible about the house, and he strolled reluctantly on, and passing people stared suspiciously at him. He followed the concourse. Ah, another reminder of the past, the old church, its glowing portals an open welcome to all the weary, and hungered, and penitent.

He entered and glided to an obscure pew. It took him back ten years. How a certain watch-night meeting one New Year's Eve long ago came back to his mind! Naomi was there then, and he was her "company." Why! Naomi was here now! Yes! his heart thrilled as he made her out.

Changed? Yes, as gentle years of sympathy, and purity, and love for fellow mankind change the face of a saint. The glory of perfect womanhood in her kindly beaming eyes made Richard Penrith shrink at a sense of his own callous unworthiness.

Angelic influences were here to-night, surely. The white-haired preacher seemed to appeal to his heart as to a brother's. He was distressed, awakened, and then a peaceful calm swayed his soul—he hated the things he had loved, he realized the hollowness of the bright bauble he had striven for, holding at its call only bitter dust and flight.

How his heart beat! It must have been dead for years? New Year's chimes ringing, he stood on the church porch, he timorously advanced to the side of the trim, loving, fond woman he had watched all the evening.

"Naomi—Miss Hewitt, do you not remember me?"

Her face paled, her little hand trembled as he grasped it. Then her soul beamed out in honest welcome, and then——

They were boy and girl again, "keeping company," walking home from watch meeting as of yore, and the holy stars smiled down.

Richard Penrith bade Naomi Hewitt good-by at the cottage porch only to return the next day.

At evening he returned to the city to be greeted with dismay at his unexplained absence by his sister.

"You have alarmed us, Richard. So unlike you, too. But you look better. I declare! You haven't seemed like your own self for an age. New Year's resolutions, Richard?" she laughed archly.

"Yes," replied the brother, his eyes sparkling, "I have determined to turn over a new leaf."

"Indeed. Give up your cigars—come out in society?"

"As a married man, yes."

"Richard!"

"I mean it, sister," spoke Richard Penrith, solemnly and earnestly. "This New Year's day has taught me to value the true pleasures of life—not wealth, not power, not pride."

"Ah! You have found something else, Richard?"

"Yes," replied Richard Penrith, tenderly. "Back at my boyhood's home, back where Naomi is waiting for me to claim her as my wife, I have found—something tangible—love!"

MARGARET MAHAN.

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM.

The Day Should Be One of Joy and Happiness in the Rural Home.

Because the regular routine of chores has to be gone through 365 days a year is no reason why Christmas and other holidays should not be days of gladness and good cheer upon the farm.

Make the same provision the day before, for the lessening the amount of work that must be done, as you do for Sunday; then let it be done up as quickly as possible as thoroughness will allow; and we believe in showing "good will" to even the dumb brutes by giving them an extra allowance of feed, either in quality or quantity—not that we think they have any appreciation of the day or motive that prompts it, but they will appreciate the fact. The work done up, turn about to have just as good a time as possible—a day full of joy and happiness because the pleasure of others is sought more than the gratification of self.

If the home consists of only "wife and I," see that wife has as much attention and "waiting on" as when you were courting her. If there is sleighing the old times can be all the better revived, if not, and the wheeling is not good, just make the day one of the best in which to see your "girl."

If the home nest has birdlings in it, have a romp with these; if the "birdlings" have grown to be "great strapping fellows," show them that father can be a boy with them and have a good time at hunting, trapping, or whatever they choose.

If those who bless your home are fair maidens of "sweet sixteen," or any other age, consult their wishes and tastes as to how the day is to be used. In either of the last three cases be sure the wife and mother is consulted and her wishes put first.

Where there is hired help, have the day a glad one for them, too, whether they wish to seek enjoyment elsewhere or in the home of their employer.

Americans do not take enough holidays. American farmers do not unbend often enough or long enough. Try taking more leisure, begin with New Year's, 1893, and continue at intervals through the year, and see if Christmas '93 does not find you younger and less worn out than Christmas 1892 did.

Last Year's Christmas Gifts.

I wonder where last year's Christmas presents are? A great many of them have gone into the shades of the dust bin, a great many of them are nuisances around houses, a great many of them have been kept to give to somebody else this year. I suppose some of them have been and are religiously kept. Everybody has some little keepsake, often the least costly, that he does not want to part with. Who knows? A little hand has wrapped it in silk paper and tied it with blue ribbon, and the ribbon is around it yet, perhaps the paper, too. There is a little tender note in the packet signed with a little tender name, and it carries indestructibly the whispers of a tender love. The little hand has possibly slapped him since, and rested affectionately before the minister in another's palm; but that little package recalls a lot of sweetness, and in the seclusion of his thoughts, even in the ecstasy of a new love, he says to himself, "If I hadn't found her out!" — San Francisco Chronicle.

"NOW, JOHNNY, you've had a merry Christmas, and you must be good till next Christmas to pay for it." "Oh, yes, of course, be good. I don't believe you can hire me to be good a whole year for a tin horse and a story book just like what Bill Jones was going to trade me for three marbles. Not much!"

MISS MAXWELL'S PENNY

THE GIRL REPORTER'S CHRISTMAS ASSIGNMENT.

Her Purchase of a Rare Coin and Her Discovery of the Mate to It—Two Guests at a Cheap Restaurant Who Formed a Rather Interesting Acquaintance.

Brother Meets Brother.

THE spell of Christmas seemed over all at the Beacon office that morning, though most of the "boys" were eating their dinners in hotels, boarding-houses, and down-town cafes, and those who had homes of their own could not take a day off to spend in them.

Even the dusty old bronze statue of Justice at the head of the stairs had blossomed out into holiday aspect. The society reporter had filled her scales with bunches of holly until the severe goddess looked like a jolly flower-girl out on a lark.

The elevator man was radiant over a small box fixed up in the corner of the machine, a box in whose slot innumerable quarters were being dropped, but from which nothing visible came out, at least nothing visible to the "boys" as they straggled into the "local"-room, and began to rummage for mail in the wire basket or peep warily into the assignment book for the day.

By and by the girl of the office came in, and, leaning her elbows contemplatively on the railing which hedged the divinity of the city editor from the hoi polloi, looked down at that imposing individual dubiously. She was among the latest of them all that morning, for somehow, after she had started from the boarding-house she called "home," the thought of that other home down by the wide Ottawa and the carols they were singing there came upon her, and she had slipped back into her little hall bedroom again to have out the "good cry" that would come.

But this, she thought truly, was no excuse to offer to the city editor. When men take the local chair they kbandon hearts. Patient, generous, aind men have been known to accept the position, and they were changed as in the twinkling of an eye. It is not written that a city editor or a ballet-master needs be heartless—perhaps it does not require to be put in so many words.

Still, she couldn't help hoping against hope that he would remember the day and send her home again. She was very tired after all the society events she had reported the previous evening, and it was so hard to work on Christmas.

The city editor called a message to the Press Bureau over the phone, signed an expense bill for the religious editor, ordered the sporting editor to look after that game of indoor baseball at the X Club, and be sharp about it, and to take in that sale of fast horses on his way back, sent the "pretty boy" of the office on a social assignment, then, running his finger down the columns of the assignment-book until he came to the initial "B, M.," said, briskly: "There's a nice little assignment for you, Miss Maxwell. Take a whirl around among the cheaper restaurants of the city—perfectly safe by daylight—and watch the kind of dinners some folk have to eat at Christmas. Splendid chance for fine descriptive writing. Make about a column and a half if it's worth it, and have your copy in early as possible, for we're going to be loaded to the guards to-night. Mind, the cheaper the restaurants the better material for you to work up."

The girl's heart sank. She was a little bit of a body, with a brave soul, but now things really seemed to be getting too hard to endure. She was even a trifle afraid to go to these places, besides the actual unpleasantness of it all, but—well, were not Ralph and little Paul even now coasting their new sleds down the hill of Monte Bello, right on to the frozen white breast of the Ottawa, and was not little Gertrude radiant in a new shawl, and her (Blanche's) pocket just so much the lighter? Of a truth, there could be no carping; if there were to be more shawls and toys there must be more work. So the girl slipped a bunch of copy-paper and a couple of pencils into her shopping bag, and started on her round.

It was the same story, new to Blanche Maxwell, perhaps, but old to those who know city streets and city ways. A dreary thronging of the "men about town."

Christmas! One of the holidays; pleasant 'tis true;
But what is the man about town to do?
All the clubs are deserted; the men who have ties
Are at home to-day, looking in somebody's eyes.
What was it to Moses, world-weary and tired,
To see—and see only—the land he desired?

It was not such a hard assignment after all, and after three or four shabby restaurants she had become quite used to it, and entered the shabbiest of them yet with almost a happy air. It was, indeed, a cheap place, even lower down in the scale than probably the city editor had dreamed of sending her, a place where there was a 1-cent line in the menu, thus- "Bread, 1 cent; milk, 1 cent," etc.

The girl took a seat at a vacant table, and ordered tea and rolls she never expected to consume, while she ensconced herself behind that morning's Beacon, and proceeded to size up the heterogeneous collection of patrons that filled the dingy place. But first she took a long look at a man who had come in and quietly seated himself opposite her. Then her eyes came back to him again, and there they stayed, and filled with all pitifulness.

He was a man of about 35 years, pale with the pallor of exhaustion and hunger, and threadbare in the extreme. Yet he was unmistakably of finer stuff than those about him, even as china excels earthenware, though it be soiled and cracked. The greasy waiter, with slippers flapping loosely from his heels, pushed the bill of fare toward the pale man, who took it anxiously, then said in quiet tones, at the same time laying a battered penny on the coarse linen cloth: "Bring me bread, please."

The greasy waiter stared impudently. Then seeing there was no earthly prospect for a tip he went off, remarking audibly that there "was a snide feller a-blowing hisself on his Christmas dinner. No doubt he'd be wantin' finger-bowls an' solid silver service."

The girl's heart grew hot within her as she heard, then she leaned forward impetuously, and said: "Pray do excuse me, but I am making a collection of coins, and I would so like to buy that curious penny from you. I will give you 50 cents for it: may I have it, please?"

And before he could answer she had confiscated the penny and laid a bright half dollar in its place.

A faint red dyed the man's bloodless brow. "I think I understand," he said quietly, "and I thank you, young lady, for I am hungry. I confess, and that is my last penny. But—pardon me, this time—you can't be overburdened with money yourself, or you wouldn't dine here Christmas day."

"Oh, please don't mind me; I've lots," blundered Blanche, "and if you don't care I'll lend you the money—just——"

The man looked grateful and astonished the greasy waiter into civility by ordering a beefsteak. Then he explained.

It, too, was an old, old story of wild oats, wickedness, illness, poverty and repentance, friends lost, and utter loneliness. The penny was the only novel feature in the whole tale, only this was a silly, unworldly girl, and she wept behind her paper long before that was spoken of. You see, people from the country are so easily moved, and—well, the man's face was a tragedy in itself.

The penny—oh, yes—it wasn't an ordinary penny at all, but one of two queer coins which had been given by an eccentric uncle to twin boys and kept afterward as talismans by them both. Somehow he never had been able to get over the idea that that penny would bring him luck. Perhaps it was only a remnant of the superstition that clung, thick as the odor of tobacco, to the wings of the wretched little theater where for a time he picked the banjo and sang topical songs. And he hated to let it go this morning horribly, but hunger is stronger than superstition or that queer thing called reverence—and so——

Well, would the young lady kindly keep the penny until he could redeem it? He would surely get work soon——

"Work!" exclaimed Blanche. "Do you mean anything?"

"Anything at all."

"Then come to the Seventh Church, corner of Mary Jane and Worthington streets. Do you know where it is?

"I WOULD LIKE TO BUY THAT CURIOUS PENNY."

I've an assignment to 'do' their Christmas-tree gathering to-night at eight o'clock, and maybe I can hear of something before then and let you know."

* * * * *

A more unworldly person than Blanche Maxwell would scarcely have expected her penniless acquaintance to keep his appointment; a less ingenuous than she would never have made it, for innocence is the most daring thing in the world. But he was there, pacing up and down in the bleak air, which penetrated his worn garments like a steel knife. She almost felt a sense of proprietorship as she greeted him and hurried him off into the pastor's private study, where she had often held converse with the keen-witted, eloquent pastor of the church. Leaving her ragged friend seated on the crimson horror of a couch presented by the Ladies' Aid Society, she went in search of the minister.

"Mr. Miller," she began breathlessly, "I've such an object for you to work off some of your charity on. I'm sure he's worthy, though I was introduced to him through no more responsible source than this penny."

The minister's benign face contracted suddenly. Lifting the penny from her hand he beckoned her to lead the way. She brought him to the study, and then stood aghast at what she had not thought of before.

The same height, hair, eyes, everything save the marks of dissipation and what contrasted with health, happiness and plenty.

"They're enough alike to be twins," she thought, and then——

"Henry—brother!"

"Robert, forgive!"

Blanche stole outside and crouched on the doorstep, while within the chorus rose:

Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.

"God and sinners reconciled," said the pale man, lifting his hat reverently.

And Blanche, the young heathen,

"HENRY—BROTHER!"

as she turned in the last page of her copy that night, murmured: "So there was luck in the crooked penny after all."—Chicago Times.

Columbus and Queen Isabella.

As it happened, Isabella had no money at hand. Her war with Granada had cost a prodigious sum. She found herself in debt even to her own servants. Political reasons, of great weight with the resolute Ferdinand, who was justly content with the practical results of concentration of power, and economical reasons, of great weight also with the conscientious Isabella, who was most anxious to bring about some system and regularity in her revenues, induced their refusal, in view of the fresh outlays required for the expedition, and of the exaggerated demands for rank and office should the expedition yield its promised results. But to the friends of the discoverer neither of these considerations appeared sufficient to warrant the abandonment and rejection of such marvelous plans.

As soon as Santangelo heard of the flight of Columbus, he went to the Queen's chamber, and implored her to order him to return, being supported in this by the Marchioness of Moya. And when the Queen complained of the exorbitant demands of the discoverer, he reminded her that the cost would be but a trifling consideration if the attempt succeeded, and if it failed could be reduced to next to nothing. When to this cogent reasoning the Queen objected the emptiness of the Castilian treasury, and the need of again pawning her jewels to raise the means, Santangelo unhesitatingly assured her of the flourishing state of the Aragonese finances, doubtless because of the revenues yielded by the expulsion of the Jew and of the resources there available, promising at the same time to win over the perplexed and inert mind of Ferdinand the Catholic.

Thereupon messengers were sent post-haste, who stopped Columbus at a neighboring bridge, some two leagues away, and made him turn back to Granada, where, in April, 1492, the articles of agreement known as the capitulations of Santa Fe, were signed, granting Columbus all he asked. Thence he went to Palos in May, to set out in August from that port upon the new and incredible Argonaut voyage, in the course of which his search for the oldest and most historic regions of the earth of olden time was to lead him, the revealer, unintentionally and unknowingly, to chance upon a new creation.—Century.

Talent Recognized.

Many citizens of Illinois who attended the recent Democratic convention at Chicago owe a debt of gratitude to genial Hank Evans, the Aurora statesman who presided over one of the doors of the convention. Henry has a warm side for all Illinoisans. Many a man who was unknown to Evans imposed upon his good nature by gaining admission under the plea that he resided at some cross-roads hamlet of Illinois. On the second day of the convention a short, pudgy fellow brushed up to the door and said:

"I have come all the way here to see this convention and I want to do it."

"Where is your home?"

"Aurora."

"Indeed! What is your name?"

"My name is Evans—Hank Evans."

"Well, I am very glad to meet you," rejoined the doorkeeper, "and if you are really Hank Evans I guess I will have to let you in, because I know Mr. Evans is a stanch Democrat, and I would be sorry to do anything to offend him."

Thereupon he passed the insistent stranger into the convention hall, at the same time pressing into his hand a calling card with his own name on it. The fellow's face was a study at that moment.

"Go in," continued Evans. "You don't deserve recognition as an Illinoisan, but your qualifications as a liar entitle you to a seat."—Chicago Mail.

HALLIDAY, the inventor of the cable street car system, states that the sight of six horses vainly endeavoring to draw a car up a steep hill at San Francisco first suggested to him the foundation for his invention.